Engaging Young People in International Affairs

Working group recommendations from a symposium held on November 15–16, 2001

Sponsored by the SIU Public Policy Institute

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One of the lessons of September 11th is that people in the United States need to pay much more attention to the other 96 percent of the world’s population. That is particularly important for our students and younger citizens who soon will be our leaders.

This symposium pulled together student leaders from four campuses, plus other distinguished participants such as former Congressman John Anderson. There is a clear receptivity to the idea of greater interest and activity.

But how do we get there?

This folder provides some concrete recommendations that we hope will interest you. Even better, stimulate you to act. And to come up with more and better ideas.

Insensitivity to the rest of the world should have died on September 11th. But did it? You and I have to help provide the answer to that question.

• UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES SHOULD REACH OUT TO ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOLS NEAR THEIR CAMPUSES TO OFFER THEIR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AS GUEST SPEAKERS FOR CLASSES. INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAMS AT UNIVERSITIES SHOULD SEND A LETTER TO ALL LOCAL SCHOOLS ADVERTISING PROGRAMS THAT WOULD BRING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO VISIT THEIR SCHOOLS.

• ALL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, AS WELL AS HIGH SCHOOLS, SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE MODEL UN PROGRAMS. GROUPS LIKE THE UN ASSOCIATION AND WORLD FEDERALISTS SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF THESE OUTSTANDING TEACHERS AND ENRICH THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

• IN ORDER TO MORE FULLY RECOGNIZE OUR HISTORY AND IDENTITY AS A DIVERSE AND MULTICULTURAL NATION AND FULFILL OUR ROLE AS A GLOBAL LEADER, SCHOOL BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONALLY SENSITIVE CURRICULUM, INCLUDING TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT ALL LEVELS AND GEOGRAPHY. IN ADDITION, SUCH A CURRICULUM SHOULD INFUSE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, CULTURAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS INTO THE TEACHING OF COURSES SUCH AS HISTORY, LITERATURE, RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT. FEDERAL AND STATE GRANT PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO IMPLEMENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

• SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD CONSIDER SUPPORTING A PROGRAM IN WHICH TEACHERS IN EACH ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL WOULD SELECT ONE TEACHER IN THEIR SCHOOL BUILDING EACH YEAR TO RECEIVE FUNDING FOR TRAVEL AND/OR STUDY DURING THE SUMMER Recess in a developing nation or a more developed country. IN MOST CASES, THIS WOULD COST LESS THAN 1 PERCENT OF A SCHOOL BUDGET AND WOULD RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING TEACHERS AND ENRICH THE CURRICULUM.

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tional students to speak at schools. U.S. students who have traveled and/or studied abroad could also enrich and encourage students through similar appearances.

- The Health Corps proposed by Sen. William Frist of Tennessee should be expanded to include non-medical personnel and the Peace Corps should also be expanded. Senator Frist should be commended for his proposal.

- Groups like the Rotary International that provide international exchanges should be applauded.

- Wherever possible, assistance to college students who wish to study and travel abroad should be provided – including internships and service learning. Such opportunities should be well-publicized and appropriate academic credit should be given.

- Opportunities for students at colleges and universities to enter into on-campus discussion and other interactions with international students should be provided and effectively promoted and marketed.

- Universities should do more to promote foreign language study and should seriously consider requiring at least two years of foreign language study.

- The alumni associations of colleges and universities or local service organizations should provide either a practicum credit and/or an international volunteer certificate for students who contribute at least 30 hours of services.

- The U.S. Congress and state legislative bodies should adopt resolutions encouraging colleges and universities to expand their study-abroad programs.

- For-credit group trips abroad should be multiplied.

- The political science department should direct that majors in the international affairs sequence participate in internship programs with international organizations – preferably overseas.

- We need to intensify our efforts to continue attracting to the United States students from overseas. Over the last 20 years, America’s share of international students has fallen from 40 percent to 30 percent.

- We should welcome teachers and volunteers from throughout the world for one- or two-year tours of duty in the U.S. as part of a reciprocal Peace Corps program. The volunteers need not be limited to service in public schools; they could also serve at community colleges, universities and community organizations, such as Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs.

- Universities and colleges should establish an international volunteer program that would provide either a practicum credit and/or an international volunteer certificate for students who contribute at least 30 hours of services.

- State governments should be urged to issue orders similar to a federal executive memorandum that states, “It is the policy of the federal government to support international education.”

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